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ABSTRACT

Group leaders of 10- to 13-year-olds may use this program guide to help the preteens interact with young children through six discussion meetings and five visits with a preschool child at home. Discussion topics concern (1) the family environment of young children, (2) children's play; (3) children's play areas at home, (4) safety at home, (5) daily routines with young children, and (6) discipline and child guidance. Each topic begins with specific objectives followed by sections providing material for discussion, activities reinforcing the discussion, and activities for preteens to do with a preschooler prior to the next meeting. In addition, resource materials for leaders are provided, including a discussion of the importance of understanding child development, a list of activities for preschoolers at home, guidelines for choosing children's furniture, ways of facilitating play for young children at home, a list of hazards to young children at home, ways of helping children with daily routines, and ways of disciplining children so that they are helped to gain self-control. (RH)

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CARING FOR YOUNG CHILDREN IN THE HOME

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CARING FOR YOUNG CHILDREN AT HOME

Introductory Comments To The Group Leader

Preteens can get excited about being involved with young children. But they need to be introduced to this experience by adults who enjoy children. Caring for young children in their own home provides a setting that's just great for discovering who children are and appreciating them as special. This booklet may also be useful to other adults who care for and about children, including parents and family day care providers. A word of caution: although this booklet could be used as a resource in a training program for babysitters, it is not designed for such a program. We recommend that 8- to 11-year-olds care for children only when an adult is present in the home.

In this booklet, you'll find six topics. Each topic begins with specific objectives, followed by three sections: "Talk About It," "Do It," and "Experiences to Share." "Talk About It" provides material for you to use in a discussion with the preteens. The "Do It" section includes activities for the preteens that will reinforce the ideas you brought up in group discussions. And "Experiences to Share" are activities for the preteens to do with a preschooler on their own before the next meeting. Questions and discoveries from "Experiences to Share" should become part of the agenda for each meeting. This is a time for each preteen to share special discoveries with other preteens in the group.

To reiterate, each section presents the same material in three ways:

1. "Talk About It" presents ideas through group discussion.
2. "Do It" reinforces these ideas through group activities.
3. "Experiences to Share" further reinforces the material through individual activities away from the group meeting and clarifies the material by further discussion at the next meeting.

The material in this booklet is written as if you, the leader, were speaking to the group. Please use your own words and avoid reading or quoting directly from the written pages.

This program is based on the assumption that each preteen will have a chance to be with a young child in a home environment at least once between meetings. Many "Experiences to Share" are designed for these home visits.

In summary, this program consists of six group meetings and five visits with a preschool child at home. If this design is inappropriate for your group, you as the leader can change the program to meet your group's needs.

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ACTIVITY MATERIALS FOR LEADERS

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V. Daily Routines Can Be Fun 11

VI. Discipline and Child Guidance 13

OBJECTIVES

To help preteens:

1. Discover the *importance of the early years of life* in healthy human growth.
2. Understand the *importance of relationships with other people* in young children's lives.
3. Appreciate that during the first years of life, young children need help in *establishing*:
   —a sense of *trust* in the world and in people who care for them.
   —a sense of their own *autonomy*, by which we mean their perception of themselves as people who exist apart from other people.
   —a sense of *initiative* in that they discover they have original ideas that other people can accept and respect.

TALK ABOUT IT

Many psychologists have said that a great deal of a person's ability to learn is formed in the very early years of life. If this is true, early experiences are extremely important in determining the kind of person one becomes. Even people who do not accept this opinion agree that the early years have a special significance. For example, one learns early whether or not it is all right to be curious—by touching, tasting, smelling, and listening to all the interesting objects around. We can make children feel it's bad to be curious if we always scold or punish them for trying to find out about interesting things.

As human beings, we all have to learn to *trust* other people. Babies learn to trust their parents when Mom and Dad respond carefully and lovingly to the babies' needs. Babies learn that parents can be trusted to feed, change, comfort, and play with them. When we meet a baby or young child, we have to prove we can be trusted. Learning whom we can or cannot trust is a constant challenge to all of us throughout our lives.

If children are cared for by gentle, loving, kind people, they learn about being gentle, loving, and kind. The people with whom they live at home and know well in their community during the first few years of their lives are probably the most important teachers human beings ever know!

DO IT

1. Ask group participants to recall a time when they observed babies or young children trying to learn something new. For example, has anyone ever seen a young child:
   —find a new food on a plate?
   —pick up a piece of sticky tape for the first time?
   —meet a stranger?
   —begin to walk?

What did the young child do when learning these things? What kinds of help did the child need from the people who cared for him or her?

2. Let's think of some ways in which you decide during the first few days of school whether you can trust a new person. What makes you feel comfortable with someone you have just met? How might a toddler feel upon meeting a person for the first time? A toddler might feel the same way you feel! Another way of thinking about trust is to take a "trust walk" with a member of your group. Divide into pairs. For five minutes close your eyes while your partner leads you outdoors or around the building. Can you spend the entire five minutes trusting your partner to lead you safely? Your degree of trust could possibly be measured by the number of times you open your eyes during the "blind walk." After one partner has taken a five-minute trust walk, switch roles and let the leader become the person who is led.

3. How would you feel about eating rattlesnake meat, chocolate-covered ants, or fried grasshoppers? If these foods are familiar to you, you may think they are delicious. But if they are new to you, you may have the same reactions a young child has to new or strange foods.

Unfamiliar food could be presented to the group at this point. How many people want to touch, smell, or ask questions before they eat it?

4. As children grow older they need to establish themselves as independent people who have strong ideas of their own. Often very young children demonstrate a need to be independent in ways that are difficult for adults to accept. Perhaps two group members could act out a situation in which a two-year-old is letting her father know that she is a "big girl" who can decide what she wants to eat—and it is *not* the peanut butter sandwich her father is offering. In the skit how can "father" help his daughter feel grown up and independent? What might a father do that would make a two-year-old feel inadequate and worthless instead of capable and lovable?

We call a child's need to be a person apart from parents, the need to be "autonomous." And we say that people who try to express their own ideas are demonstrating their "initiative."

EXPERIENCES TO SHARE

1. When you visit your preschool friend at home this week, talk with the child's mother or father about ways in which you can help the preschooler get to know you. Perhaps the child will want to sit on a parent's lap and watch you during the first visit. Perhaps the child will play with you without speaking until he or she gets to know you. Perhaps the child will be very excited to have you visit and will want to show you all kinds of tricks, places, or possessions. Each child will have a special way of discovering whether or not you are a person who can be trusted to be a friend.

2. Talk with your own parents about what you were like as a baby, a two-year-old, and a preschooler. How did you react to new people and new situations? How did you let your parents know that you wanted to be independent or grown up? Was your way the same as or different from the ways in which others of us in this group showed that we were anxious to establish our autonomy and initiative?

OBJECTIVES

1. To help preteens understand that play:
   a. Is the child's way of *discovering the world* and working through a relationship with it.
   b. Offers the child opportunities to *explore* and manipulate the environment.
   c. Provides one way for children to *express inner feelings* about real and unreal things.
2. To help preteens recognize that:
   a. Play is a legitimate and valuable occupation.
   b. The quality of a child's play depends upon the ingenuity, energy, and skill of those who care for the child.

Supplementary Material for the Leader:

Alphabet of Activities for Preschoolers at Home (see Resource Section page **18**).

Choosing Children's Furniture (see Resource Section page **23**).

Play for Young Children at Home (see Resource Section page **25**).

Understanding Children Through Play NE-218 — Available from the Cooperative Extension Service, University of Connecticut, Storrs, Connecticut 06268.

TALK ABOUT IT

It's hard to picture a child who never plays because most children we know spend most of their time at play. A child who never plays may be sick or deeply unhappy. Children's play is one sign of their physical and mental health. Try to remember for a minute the kinds of play you enjoyed most when you were younger. Were the activities you liked those that let you imagine all kinds of wild and wonderful adventures? Did you like to pretend you were an animal, monster, or person quite different from your everyday self? Or did you enjoy the kind of play that helped you learn to run, climb, or catch a ball better? Perhaps you also liked activities that linked you with other people, so you could laugh and talk with friends. You may remember expressing some really strong feelings through play; young children often find it easier to play out feelings of anger, fear, or joy than to talk about them!

Sometimes play lets children do all these things at once. For example, if we watch two four-year-olds play "train" we may see them:

—try out what it feels like to be a train engineer, conductor, or even the engine itself.

—learn to build with boxes, boards, and chairs as they construct the pretend train.

—get some important experiences in using language by laughing and talking with each other.

—express anger with the "dumb old engine" or work out their fears that trains are fierce or somehow dangerous.

We all should be cautious about describing young children's activities as "just play." Through play, children learn. When we help children play and show them that we think play is important, as well as fun, we help them learn.

Young children have a great deal to learn about themselves, other people, and the world around them. They are not yet ready to be pushed into reading, writing, and arithmetic although many early experiences provide a foundation for later academic skills. All of us learn through play! Let's look at some ways in which we learn as we play.

DO IT

1. Divide into small groups. The preteens in each small group should make a list of play activities they enjoy. After each play activity, describe what they might learn through the activity. For example:

Play Activity	*What I Learned*
Roller skating	Muscle coordination
Scrabble	Spelling, vocabulary
Swimming	Coordination, what water is like
Doll play	What it might feel like to be someone else

2. Try some of the kinds of play young children enjoy. What makes an activity fun for young children? What can we do to help children have fun with a collection of pots and pans? With a cardboard box? With a ball? Play with these things yourselves! Can you learn from this kind of play? What might a young child learn by joining you in these activities? Think of the differences between the ways preteens and preschoolers play; see if you can point out some changes that result from increased experiences with play. For

example, does experience help a child develop a longer attention span, play games by rules, understand sharing and taking turns, learn to express feelings with words instead of by hitting or kicking? Experiences should lead to more mature forms of behavior. Play experiences help children learn in ways that are lots of fun!

3. From the *Alphabet of Activities for Preschoolers at Home* choose two or three activities and try them out during the meeting. Would the idea "work" with young children? Can you make up your own alphabet of activities young children might enjoy?

EXPERIENCES TO SHARE

Try one or two of the activities on the *Alphabet of Activities for Preschoolers at Home*. Write down what you did, whether or not you and the child enjoyed the activity, and what you might do differently next time.

OBJECTIVES

To help preteens:

1. Know that the play area you choose and how you arrange the playthings in that area will affect how young children behave and play.
2. Consider that small children need equipment and furniture that is built or adapted to their size and abilities.
3. Look at ways to arrange space and play materials that are *safe and encourage fun and learning.*

Supplementary Material for the Leader:

Choosing Children's Furniture (see Resource Section page **23**).

Play For Young Children at Home (see Resource Section page **25**).

TALK ABOUT IT

Children learn about themselves and the world they live in through play. As the preschooler joins with friends to turn a cardboard box into a house, or pretends to be a "fierce tiger" crawling through a forest of boxes and blankets, the child grows physically, emotionally, intellectually, and socially. Through play, children tell us what is important to them, express feelings, and experiment with new ideas. As adults we can set the stage for learning by providing indoor and outdoor play areas for young children. Growth can be encouraged by introducing play materials into these areas.

When arranging play areas for young children, remember that they like to be part of family activities. It's better to put their toys in a special place in the kitchen or family room than in an isolated attic or basement.

Space has a tremendous influence on how we behave and feel. Think about how quiet activities, pretend play, construction, and messy activities may require that you arrange your indoor and outdoor space differently. Talk about this with the preteens. The supplementary material gives you excellent ideas, and you should take the time to read this section.

DO IT

1. Experiment with what it feels like to be in an adult-scaled room at child height. Try eating food with a "giant serving spoon." Try to hang a coat on an imaginery hook that is beyond your reach. Crawl

around the room on all fours to see how the world looks from that perspective.

2. Arrange an "inviting" toy space in the meeting room for preschoolers. Provide toys and materials. Why did you choose the toys and material you did? Why did you arrange them as you did?

3. Look at pictures of children at play inside and outside. Talk about parts of the body children use, how children learn through play.

4. Describe good arrangements for play of young children you have seen or experienced. What makes them good?

EXPERIENCES TO SHARE

1. Visit a young child at home. Note play arrangements. What arrangements or equipment did you see that made the child's play productive, safe, and creative? Do you have any suggestions for improvement?

2. Borrow a book or magazine about children's rooms from the library or a friend. Which rooms appeal to you as good for young children at play? What kind of indoor play space could you design? Outside? What "spaces" are available, but seldom used by or for young children? Can you dream up a "crazy" idea about a play space for children that might work?

OBJECTIVES

To help preteens:

1. Become aware of the need to keep young children safe.
2. *Identify hazards* found in homes.
3. List *safety precautions* that will protect young children at home.

Supplementary Material for the Leader:

A Child's World of Hazards (see Resource Section page 27).

Is Your Home Safe For Children? (see Resource Section page 27).

TALK ABOUT IT

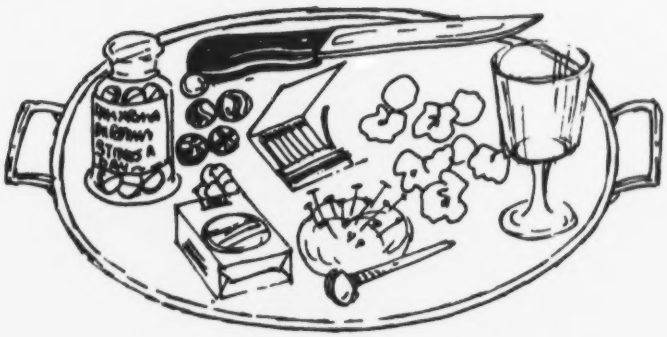
Accidents are the leading cause of death among young children. Each year thousands of children die in the home from accidental poisonings, falling, suffocating, shootings, or smoke inhalation. Most of these accidents could have been prevented if adults had taken time to look at the world through a child's eyes. To the young child, real guns may look like toys. Dangerous, discarded refrigerators may resemble play houses. Holes in electrical sockets may seem like toys in which to poke coat hangers. Even ordinary items in the home may be dangerous when misused by the young child. A house plant, if eaten by a young child, is sometimes lethal. Many child development specialists believe potential hazards should be placed well out of the reach of young children. It is important to reduce hazards in a home. Coupled with adequate supervision, this can cut down on young children's injuries.

DO IT

1. Let's divide into pairs. Each pair can take a pencil and paper to use on a Hazard Hunt. At the word "Go," look around this room and list all the things you can see that might be dangerous for young children. Next to each item list one way to make it less dangerous. At the end of 10 minutes, let's see who has the most "hazards." A sample list might look like this:

Hazard	*Correction*
Open window	Screen or guard
Uncovered wall plug	Safety plug
Sharp corner on table	Rearrange furniture or pad the corner
Unstable chair	Remove, replace, or repair chair
Cigarettes on a table	Remove to high or safe place

2. Now let's go on a different kind of safety hunt. On this tray are several objects, all of which are dangerous to young children. Let's look at each object and talk about why it is dangerous. Then I am going to take the tray out of the room and remove one or two objects. When I come back, try to tell me what's



missing. (Objects might include cigarettes, matches, pins, nails, balloons, popcorn, a knife, etc.)

3. Let's list all the other hazards you might find in a home. Now list some precautions we can take to keep children safe (see safety checklist in supplementary material).

One important way to keep children safe is to provide them with lots of interesting, well-supervised activities.

EXPERIENCES TO SHARE

1. Try a "Hazard Hunt" in your or a preschooler's home.
2. Decide one thing you could do to make young children safe in your home. Ask your parents to let you see if you can carry it out.
3. Make a poster telling other people about some accidents that can happen to children at home, in back yards, and/or around their neighborhoods. See if a public place in your community would like to display your poster.

Meeting V - Daily Routines Can Be Fun

OBJECTIVES

To help preteens:

1. Understand that such daily routines as eating, sleeping, washing, and toileting can be *difficult* for young children.
2. Discuss ways to make routine activities *pleasant sources of fun and learning* for young children.
3. Look at routine activities from the *child's point of view* in order to understand and accept childrens' behavior.

Supplementary Material for the Leader:

Helping Children With Daily Routines (see Resource Section page **29**).

Teaching Manners (see Resource Section page **30**).

TALK ABOUT IT

At our meeting today we are going to talk about some things most human beings do every day. Can anybody tell us what they are? Most people in our country eat, sleep, use the toilet, dress, and wash every single day of their lives. Although we take these daily routines pretty much for granted, very young children don't. They sometimes find such routines difficult, boring, or unnecessary. Much of the learning that people have to do during their early years involves caring for and controlling their bodies. As we learn more about young children at home, we can see that eating, resting, sleeping, toileting, and bathing occupy a good part of a child's day. Unlike adults, children do not separate work from play, or daily routines from interesting experiences. Young children see all situations as chances to *play, work, and learn.* When children play with food or dawdle over washing their hands, they are not trying to be difficult or naughty. Instead, they see a bowl of oatmeal or a sink full of water as wonderful and exciting to explore.

All of us mix play, work, and routine. For instance, does anyone enjoy bubble baths? Do you like to melt gelatin dessert in your mouth before you swallow it, or do you like to invent weird new combinations for sandwiches? Well, children like to make daily routines fun, too. Can any of you remember seeing a child turn a daily routine like dressing or eating into play or work?

DO IT

1. Look for a magazine picture of a child doing a routine activity. Use this picture to make a poster. On the poster, list five suggestions for ways another person could help the child: 1) Feel proud of him/her self through the activity; 2) Learn something from the activity; and 3) Enjoy the activity.

2. Make up a simple story for a child you know, using routine and other activities the child goes through in a day. Illustrate your story with stick figures,

drawings, or cut-out magazine pictures. Share the story with your young friend. Your story might go like this:

"In the morning _____ gets out of bed. He puts on his _____ and his _____. He goes to the _____ for breakfast. He eats _____ and _____, etc, etc.

3. Of course, children need sleep. Some, however, take afternoon naps, while others don't. Many little children fuss at bedtime. Let's break into groups now and list:

a. Why many children don't like to go to bed.

b. How we can make bedtime more pleasant for a child?

After we have discussed this for awhile, we will come back to a large group and share our ideas.

During the group discussion, see whether the following topics have been covered:

—telling the child a story or singing a song.

—giving the child a favorite toy or blanket.

—finding a quiet activity for the child before lying down.

—making sure the child has a drink of water and a trip to the bathroom before going to bed.

(Note to leader: Don't impose these ideas on the preteens. Encourage the preteens to discuss their own feelings about going to sleep.) Sometimes children are having fun playing and it's hard to stop. Has that ever happened to you? Or maybe children feel afraid to be alone in the dark or to go to sleep alone. Do you remember feeling that way? What could you do to help a child who has these feelings?

EXPERIENCES TO SHARE

1. When you visit the young child this week, try to talk with one of the parents about a few of the following:

a. The child's behavior at bedtime.

—What usually happens?

—Is there a set time for going to bed?

—Who decides when it's time to go to bed?

—Is bedtime pleasant or unpleasant? How does the parent try to make bedtime easier and more pleasant? How does the child usually react . . . and feel?

—Does the child use certain tactics to avoid going to bed?

b. The child's eating behavior.

—Is the child expected to eat foods he or she doesn't like?

—What is done to make meals more pleasant?

—Is the child encouraged to try eating different foods?

—Try to recall a funny mealtime experience.

2. During the week collect magazine pictures showing some routine activities of preschoolers. Make up a story about young children's behavior and feelings as they go through daily activities. Use the magazine pictures to illustrate your story. Tell your story and show the pictures to your preschool friend when you visit this week.

3. Share the story you made up during the meeting with a preschooler.

OBJECTIVES

To help preteens:

1. Define discipline as a way of *guiding young children.*
2. Adopt a *positive approach* toward helping children develop *abilities to make choices about their own behavior.*
3. Experiment with several techniques of using a *positive approach to guiding young children.*

Supplementary Material for the Leader:

Discipline Means Helping Children Gain Self-control (see Resource Section page 31).

TALK ABOUT IT

Parents often yell, criticize, or physically punish children. Parents defend these actions by saying, "This is the way to teach a child right and wrong," "We do it because we love our children and want them to be happy," "This is how our children learn," or "We're frustrated and don't know what else to do." Almost all would agree that they discipline their children in these ways because these are the only methods they were taught to use. These negative ways of disciplining are forms of punishment. If parents or other adults use negative discipline most of the time, children may grow up feeling they are not capable or lovable people.

There are other more positive ways of disciplining that not only help children feel good about themselves, but also encourage children to control their own behaviors. These positive methods include:

—showing appreciation for something accomplished, rather than criticizing for not doing better.

—giving choices to children only when they are actually encouraged to decide among options.

—telling children what they *can* do instead of what they cannot do.

—using words and tones that help children feel confident and comfortable, rather than frightened and ashamed.

—avoiding comparing one child with another.

—distracting children with an acceptable activity that is similar to the one they are doing that is unacceptable.

These positive ways of disciplining help build good feelings among people of all ages.

DO IT

1. Here are some specific suggestions to help you guide young children:

a. Tell them what they *can* do rather than what they *can't.* Say "Paint the paper," *not* "Don't paint the table." Change the following "don'ts" into "do's":

—"Don't yell inside." ("Yell outside, speak quietly inside.")

—"Don't pound the piano." ("Play gently.")

—"Don't talk with your mouth full." ("Swallow before talking.")

b. Give children a choice only when you can accept the decision they make. If there is actually no real alternative, say "Let's go in for lunch now," *not* "Would you like to go in now?" How would you change the following statements if a "no" reply is unacceptable?

—"Would you like to sit in this chair?" ("Here is a chair for you.")

—"Shall we go upstairs for a nap?" ("Now it's time for a nap.")

—"Would you like to share your cookies?" ("One cookie is for you and one for your friend.")

c. Try to use words and a tone of voice that make children feel confident and comfortable, not frightened or ashamed. Say, "Please keep the food on your plate," not "Quit messing." How would you change the following?

—"If you hit her, I'll hit you." ("Hitting hurts,

use your voice.")

—"You are a messy boy for spilling the milk." ("Let's clean it up together.")

—"Can't you ever do anything right? Look at the way you've messed up your painting." ("You used many colors in your painting.")

d. Avoid trying to get children to do something by comparing them with others. Say "Let me help you with your boots," not "Johnny put his boots on himself. Are you a big boy like Johnny?" Change the following statements:

—"Susie didn't cry when she bumped *her* head." ("I guess that really hurt.")

—"Billy finished his supper a long time ago; can you finish yours like Billy?" ("Some people eat quickly and some eat more slowly.")

e. Distraction works best if we offer children the same kind of activity as the one they have chosen for themselves. For example: A child who is sitting on the couch sucking a thumb is more likely to want to read a story with you than to play a running game. What might you offer to distract a child who is:

—repeatedly jumping off the kitchen table? (Find another jumping place.)

—lying under the table cuddling a teddy bear? (Offer to read a book with the child on your lap.)

2. Ask the preteens to list on a sheet of paper the most difficult kinds of behavior in dealing (lovingly and patiently) with young children. This list may include some of the following:

biting	swearing	defiance
fighting	noisiness	messiness
shyness	restlessness	fearfulness

Most young children exhibit behavior in one, a few, or several of these areas. Which do the preteens feel are the most difficult to handle? Can you see how some of the approaches to positive guidance we just discussed can help us deal with these difficult kinds of behaviors?

3. Some people believe young children should be taught "to mind," to unquestioningly obey commands adults give them. Do you agree? What do you think? How and when should obedience be encouraged?

EXPERIENCES TO SHARE

1. Estimate the number of times you say "no," "don't," or "quit," rather than "do" or "try this" during visits with your preschool friend.

2. During your visits with the children, what have you seen that makes you think they want to act like you or someone else they admire?

RESOURCE MATERIALS FOR LEADERS

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The Importance of Understanding Child Development*
(Meeting I)

The first period of childhood, roughly the first five years of life, is sometimes referred to as a "submerged city" to which we return with our own children, astonished that we can no longer easily find our way. Although most adults have vivid childhood memories, most of them are rooted in experiences the adults had during their early school years. Because we cannot remember our own preschool years, it is often hard to accept and fully understand the problems of very young children. The more we can learn about the process of child development, the more possible it may be for us to respond sensitively and wisely to our children as they progress through the sometimes difficult stages of human growth.

*MILESTONES IN DEVELOPMENT 0-5 YRS.***

BIRTH TO TWO YEARS

—seeks to discover if world is safe
—gains trust through feeding, exploring, and established routines
—depends on adults
—needs abundance of smiles, laughter, and reassuring pats
—dramatic physical changes
—sleeps less

TWO YEARS

—negative (says "No" many times)
—possessive (says "That's mine")
—noisy
—seeks to get his or her own way
—curious and explores
—choice-making almost impossible
—reasoning isn't very useful; child can't make up his or her mind

THREE YEARS

—tries to please those important to him or her
—conforms to suggestions
—can be reasoned with
—attentive when spoken to, especially when called by name
—makes choices

FOUR YEARS

—questions and more questions
—seeks friends, but has problems getting along
—assertive and boastful at times
—tattles frequently
—self-centered
—enjoys exploring with made-up words
—often asks, "Will you let me try my idea?"

FIVE YEARS

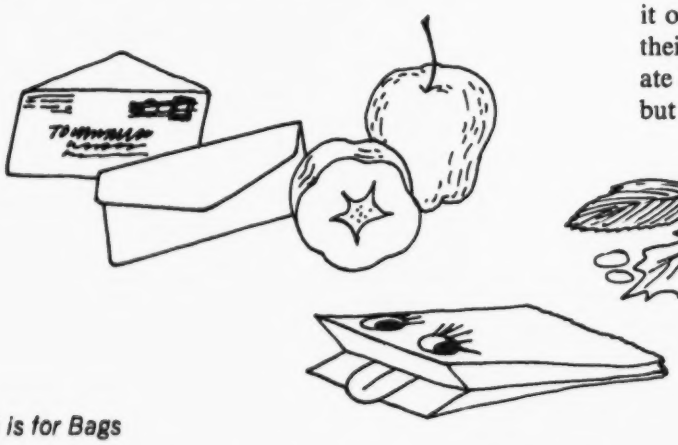
—friendly with friends (usually) and parents
—businesslike
—dependable
—likes to feel independent
—dressing up lets child express moods and feelings
—short-time projects are interesting and entertaining

*Taken from Family Day Care Newsletter. Edited by R. Bookman, Cornell University.
***What's a Parent to do? A Program for Fathers and Mothers,* Carol L. Anderson, Cooperative Extension Service, Iowa State University.

Alphabet of Activities for Preschoolers at Home
(Meeting II)

A is for Apples

Better than cookies for snacks, apples are good for a four-year-old to practice cutting skills with a table (*not* paring) knife. Perhaps children can cut up apples for a snack, talking about the "halves" and "quarters" they make as they cut. Children can cut up apples for applesauce. The adult can help them cut an apple across the core to "find the secret star design inside the apple." In the fall, many children enjoy a trip to see apples growing on trees and perhaps to pick their own.



B is for Bags

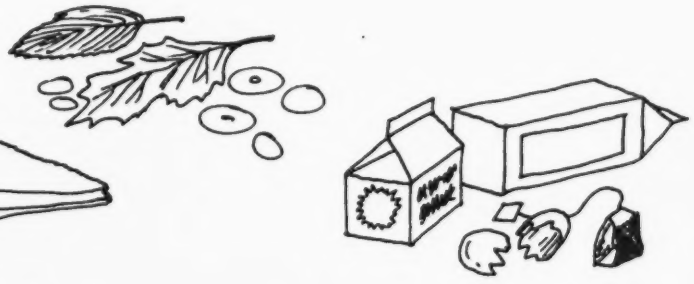
Brown paper bags from the grocery store can be used as giant puppets with faces drawn on them and perhaps some shredded newspaper as hair or beards. Small preschoolers can help cut out the nose, mouth, and eye holes so that the bags can be worn as masks. Bags can also be cut into elegant, big sheets of paper for small artists to color or paint on.

C is for Cartons

Again, you can get cartons from the grocery store, although perhaps liquor cartons are the sturdiest. Young children will find endless uses for boxes. One box can be a car, plane, bed, or cage. Strung behind each other boxes become trains, boats, or school buses. And stacked on top of each other, they become play stores, offices, or counters over which important business can be transacted with young friends. A collection of sturdy cartons can be used in the same way as a set of sturdy building blocks.

D is for Design

Almost any kind of beautiful junk can become material for a beautiful design by a child. Pebbles, leaves, and sticks can be arranged on sand; crumpled candy papers or scraps of fabric or ribbon from a sewing project can be arranged on a piece of paper and held in place with a flour-and-water paste. When first introduced to paste, children almost always want to use it as a material by itself. They may finger-paint with it or pile it on their paper in a small mound and stick their design materials into it. We should set appropriate limits (such as "keep the materials on the table"), but leave children free to create their own designs.



E is for Envelopes

Save old envelopes for a game of pretend post office. Young children will love to scribble on pieces of paper and tuck them in envelopes as surprises for their family or friends. They may enjoy watching a mailman deliver real mail and then pretend to be mailmen, using paper or laundry bags for their own mail pouches.

F is for a "Feeling" Game

Put many objects of various textures in a paper bag. Ask each child to put one hand into the bag without looking and feel the objects. Ask if the objects are long or short, hard or soft, round or square. Help the children learn words to describe the objects.

G is for Garbage

Don't always throw away your old tea bags, coffee grounds, or egg shells. Sometimes when you are feeling brave, clear the sink, put some old towels on the floor, dress your children in bathing suits or waterproof aprons, and make some interesting concoctions in the sink. Show them what happens when you put the tea bag in water. Let the children smash up the egg shells so they understand how delicate egg shells are. Tell the children not to smash shells when they are full of egg, but sometimes it's OK to smash shells that are empty.

H is for Hair

Most of us forget how fascinated young children can be by the color, texture, and style of other peoples' hair. Children may enjoy playing beauty shop by helping you brush and style your hair. For some children, who are afraid of getting hair cuts or shampoos, playing through the experience allows them to express the anxiety they may be unable to put into words.

I is for Ice

Making, tasting, and melting ice is an interesting scientific experiment. Learning about the effects of temperature on water helps children understand other phenomena in the world.

J is for Jell-O

Preschoolers can do many kinds of simple cooking, with surprisingly little help. If the children are making gelatin, an adult can heat and pour the boiling water, but the children can open the package, pour the powder into a bowl, measure cold water, stir, etc. Children can also make sandwiches, simple puddings, soups, and simple casseroles; they can help with cookies and cakes. Such activities help children see themselves as competent, cooperative people and encourage them to tackle more and increasingly difficult tasks.

K is for King

A crown made from aluminum wrap, construction paper, or even newspaper designates one child "King for ten minutes," during which time other people obey his or her every (reasonable) command. When ten minutes are up, someone else wears the crown and becomes ruler of the household kingdom.

L is for Library

Community libraries are one of the richest resources for young children and adults. Increasingly, public libraries welcome very young children, and, in addition to lending them books, often have story hours, films, concerts, and other special events particularly for preschoolers.

M is for Music

A marching band with pots and pans for instruments may be too noisy as an everyday activity, but every once in a while it's a great special event. Singing songs, listening to records or the radio, dancing, or just moving to music are all easy, pleasant investments

of time with young children. Babies seem to enjoy music at a surprisingly early age, and by age two or three, children often definitely prefer particular songs and records.

N is for Newspapers

Very young children will enjoy tearing old newspapers, if you explain to them that you have finished reading *these* papers, so it's OK to tear them up. Children who are just learning to use scissors often find newspapers the easiest material upon which to practice their cutting skills. If you don't remember how to make newspaper hats, ask around until you find someone to show you. Or look for *Curious George Rides a Bicycle* in the picture book section of your library. In the middle of this very entertaining story about a mischievous monkey, you will find instructions complete with step-by-step diagrams for making a paper hat.

O is for Old Clothes

The game of dress-up never seems to lose its appeal for preschoolers. Boys and girls alike enjoy long skirts, high heels, fancy hats, and gloves, as well as helmets, painters caps, ties, etc.

P is for Pictures

Looking at pictures in magazines and catalogs; cutting out pictures for scrapbooks; making a picture collection of "all the things we like to eat," or "all the pets it would be fun to have," or "all the groceries we need to remember to buy when we go to the store" are absorbing and a particularly good occupation for a rainy day or a time when children need to rest or stay in bed. Large magazine pictures can also be glued to cardboard, then cut into several large pieces to make a puzzle.

Q is for Quiet

Anyone who takes care of preschoolers knows "quiet" doesn't happen often. Sometimes it may be fun to suggest playing the "quiet" game, in which you keep just as still as you can and listen for all the sounds you often cannot hear. Ask the children, "What can you hear when we are very, very quiet?" Ask this question when you and the children are inside, then go outside and ask the question again. Did you hear any sounds you had never noticed before?

R is for Raking

Little children enjoy raking, particularly with rakes that are small or have been cut down for them. Although they will rake sand or grass, the most fun, of course, is to rake up a big pile of leaves to jump into.

S is for Sand

Before winter closes in, you may want to fill a box or a small plastic wading pool with sand. During the long, cold months, digging and playing in an "inside" sandbox in the cellar, on the porch, or even on the kitchen floor (well covered with newspaper) can be an absorbing pastime for a three- or four-year-old.

T is for Table (or Tent)

It's easy to forget the simple trick of throwing a blanket over a table and creating a tent or cave into which children can crawl, perhaps taking with them special toys, pillows, a flashlight, and a snack.

U is for "Underneath" Hunts

This is a hard one for people who don't like dust, but children will enjoy a trip through the house or yard to look at the "underneaths" of things. What does the "underneath" of a bed, dresser, refrigerator, or crock reveal? Sometimes a long-lost toy will be found along the way.

V is for Vacuum Cleaning

Children can really help you by vacuuming a rug or helping you find dust in rarely cleaned corners. Obviously, they will find it more fun to vacuum something that is really dirty than to do routine cleaning; but then, most people enjoy seeing results of their efforts. It is also interesting for children to watch you reverse the vacuum cleaner current air so that it blows out instead of in. Perhaps they can chase a feather a short distance with the rush of air.

W is for Window Washing

Again, children can offer real help, have fun, and see themselves as contributing members of the household by washing windows. Adults should not entrust poisonous cleaning solutions to preschoolers, but clear water and lots of elbow grease can often produce very shiny glass panes.

X is for X Marks the Spot

Make a big X out of cardboard or construction paper, and use it to mark the location of a "hidden treasure"—a box of raisins under a pillow, a new library book under a chair, or perhaps a new box of crayons under the sink. Children love the excitement of a treasure hunt; and as they grow older, you can give them increasingly difficult clues.

Y is for Yelling

Most adults can tolerate a certain amount of sheer,

exuberant, joyful noise—if it's in the right place. Help children find places where it is all right to yell and encourage them to let loose. A park, playground, field, or country road make good yelling places. Excessive inside yelling or extremely active behavior should be a clue that the children need to go somewhere to let off steam. Children can (and should) go outside in almost any kind of weather. A brief run outside on a cold day is well worth the effort of bundling up in winter clothing.

Z is for the "Zillion" Things

. . . . . preschoolers can and will do, given some raw materials, a little space, and the help of a friendly, enthusiastic adult. Children learn through their play. We can help them learn by encouraging and stimulating them to play.

Toys For Two- to Five-Year-Olds

How children play is usually influenced by the kinds of toys they play with. For example:

Concentration or a long attention span is often developed as children play with clay, blocks, paint, doll-corner materials, beads, scissors and paper, puzzles, and crayons.

Quiet play is likely to be fostered by picture books, bead-stringings, peg boards, tiles, and other toys, such as puzzles, that involve sorting and fitting together. Such toys should be selected according to the child's age.

Active play can usually be stimulated by balls, push-and-pull toys, a hammer and nails, crates and boards, and outdoor equipment in general.

Cooperative play is usually promoted by use of wagons, dishes, hollow blocks, assorted blocks, doll-corner materials, dump trucks, see-saws, and lawn swings.

Conversation is usually encouraged when children play with friends their own age and with materials that increase cooperative play.

Choosing Children's Furniture
(Meetings II and III)

We often fail to consider that children have special needs and are not simply "small adults." This is especially true when it comes to buying furniture. Children's furniture is often just adult furniture built on a smaller scale. Furniture styles tend to reflect the times or fashion, not the child's developmental needs. Thus, we have to be especially careful to recognize and understand children's needs when we choose their furniture.

THE NEED TO EXPLORE

Young children actively explore their worlds trying to better understand their relationships to people and objects around them. While exploring they use all their senses: they want to see, hear, touch, taste, and smell. Yet, young children's worlds are often narrowly limited to their immediate surroundings—their home and its furnishings. Thus, when selecting children's furniture, be sure to consider young children's needs to use their senses in discovering and manipulating their world. Children's furniture should encourage them to explore.

THE IDEA OF OWNERSHIP

Children learn who they are by interacting with people and objects around them. Having their own bed or chair strengthens their sense of security because they can depend on that bed or chair to be there each day. A sense of self begins to emerge as they recognize the concept of ownership: "This bed is mine." Children must learn ownership or possession before they can begin to share.

MASTERY OF ENVIRONMENT

Children learn what they can and can't do by testing their environment. They may destroy objects around them just to see if those objects can be destroyed. Young children don't maliciously intend to be destructive; they are simply trying to find out what they can do. Although we shouldn't encourage children to destroy, we should recognize their need to master surroundings.

Parents can discourage destruction by selecting simply built furniture that children can understand and control. A small rocking chair is an excellent example. Children find out that when they move, the chair rocks and they experience feelings of mastery as well as rhythm.

Children also enjoy rearranging their belongings. So, if safety permits, choose furniture that's easy for them to move. Moving furniture gives children practise in solving problems and also lets them know they can control inanimate objects.

DEVELOPMENT OF MOTOR SKILLS

Carefully selected furniture can also help children's large muscle development. Children like furniture they can crawl over, under, through, and around. They also like furniture they can move. These activities stimulate large muscle development and coordination.

Often children's lives are a series of moves from one piece of furniture to the next. When young children wake up in the morning, they begin their routine of bed to high-chair to playpen to car seat to bed. Using furniture too much to confine children inhibits motor development. Children who are not free to explore their surroundings most of the day will learn less because they have fewer experiences. Whenever possible, it is best to allow children to play freely in the room filled with furniture the children can manipulate.

CREATIVITY

Children may wish to use their furniture as props for fantasy play. Through fantasy play, children learn how to solve problems, come up with new solutions, and cope with frustration.

You can encourage creativity by evaluating furniture design before you buy. Design can sometimes be so restrictive the piece can serve only one purpose. Simple furniture can usually be used in more situaations. A basic table may combine with a blanket and become a house, a tent, or a hideaway. Allow children to explore new uses for their furniture.

CHECKLIST FOR SELECTING CHILDREN'S FURNITURE

Before selecting furniture for a child, ask yourself these questions:

1. Is it safe?
   - Does it have rough or sharp edges?
   - Are the paints, finishes, and plastics non-toxic?
   - Is its base-height relationship satisfactory?
2. Is it appropriate?
   - Does it fit the child's skills?
   - Does it fit the child's age?
   - Does it fit the child's size?
   - Does it fit the child's interests?
   - Does it fit the child's abilities?
3. Is it durable?
   - Will it last with normal use?
4. Will it stimulate?
   - Does it encourage creativity?
   - Does it encourage large muscle development and coordination?
   - Does it encourage exploration?
5. Is it colorful?
6. Will it encourage creative play?
7. Is it adaptable?
   - Can it serve several functions?
8. Is this furniture needed?
   - Is it functional?
   - Is it needed now or could purchase be delayed?

Not every piece of furniture will meet all the above criteria. Furnishings should always be appropriate and safe. Other requirements will vary according to how the furniture will be used.

Play for Young Children at Home
(Meetings II and III)

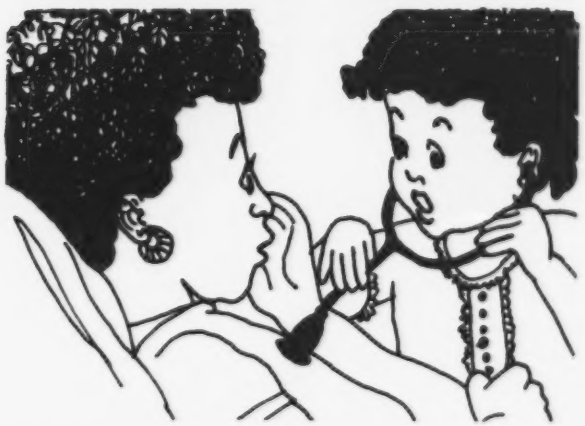
Play is one way children tell us about things and ideas they think are important. How can we help children play? Here are some suggestions.

—By accepting their ideas and helping play them out. ("Yes, I'll be the mommy—you tell me what I have to do.")

—By letting them know it's all right to have mean as well as kind feelings and helping play them out. ("You are giving that doll a *hard* spanking; you must feel very mad.")

—By giving children play materials and activities that encourage them to use their ideas and imaginations.

—By watching out for children's special needs. For example, we can make sure that when children are being physically active, they're also safe. Or we can allow for a few quiet, restful minutes between noisy, energetic activities.



Where do we help children play?

—In a playroom or play corner.

—In the child's bedroom.

—For cooking, art work, and messy kinds of activities, in the kitchen or bathroom.

—Outdoors.

The person in charge of the children will often find it helpful to be in the play area rather than anywhere else in the house or yard.

How do we keep children safe while they play?

—The place where children play should not contain poisonous cleaning compounds, medicines, tools, gasoline, turpentine, machinery, open stairways or windows, hot radiators, steam pipes, stoves, space heaters, or other hazards. It is wise to make it physically impossible for children to reach anything that may injure them. *Never* rely on children to remember "No, no, don't touch."

If children are to be outside, check the play area carefully to see:

—How to keep them away from the street, driveways, cellarways, and garages (where there may be gasoline, tools, and other dangers).

—That there is no "potential hazard" such as a lawn mower, clipping shears, water-filled ditch, pool, or ladder, that parents may have forgotten to put away or tell you about.

—That the playthings they are to use are safe and in good repair. Encourage the pre-teen to look for such dangers as a frayed swing rope or broken glass in the sandbox.

When children play outside, older people can set the stage for them. We can provide many playthings for children: something to dig, swim, or splash in; something to climb, ride, jump, walk, sit or lie down on; something to push; something for creeping and crawling. Young children need supervision during these activities.

—Although outside equipment doesn't have to be expensive, it must be safe and durable. Assembling and arranging outside equipment requires time and work.

—Sometimes children run out of ideas about what to do with their "same old toys." To give the children and toys a new lease on play, try rearranging the toys: set a table for a tea party; stack up empty food containers to create a "store"; or make a "gas station" for tricycles.

To make a backyard more interesting to young children, you may want to add some of the following playthings:

—A few thoroughly washed, used auto tires.

—Wooden crates are scarce today. If you do find them, sand and paint them to make them safe. A little paint and some imagination can turn a crate into a child-sized stove for baking sand pies, water soup, mud stew, and pebble potatoes. Or you can cover large crates with a blanket to make a play house.

Almost anything you can do with a wooden crate you can do with a cardboard carton; but, of course, cardboard is less durable and won't last as long. If you don't want to work hard to make wooden boxes safe and splinter-free, however, you may prefer to use cardboard.

You can improvise climbing equipment by using strong, splinter-free boards, short lengths of an old ladder, strong boxes, saw horses, or wooden reels from the telephone company.

Children enjoy doing usual things in unusual ways. For example, you might rig up a special way for a child to get into his own house, such as a ladder up to the porch so he doesn't just go up the front steps.

Children think the following kinds of junk are more fun than most store toys: short lengths of hose; old steering wheels attached to boxes or stuck in the ground; switches and other leftover parts of engines, clocks, telephones, radios. Be sure such junk is safe and can't be plugged in anywhere.

Sand and water hold first place on children's lists of things they enjoy most of all. Here are some suggestions on how to use these materials:

—Give each child a two-inch paint brush and a tin can full of water. Two-year-olds will enjoy painting indoor furniture with a dry brush, while older children will paint anything outside with water, soapsuds, mud, or a mixture of all three.

—Give children some plastic detergent bottles to wash in a tub of water. You can color the bubbles with food coloring. When the detergent bottles are clean, cut off the tops and use them for sand toys.

—Using a set of dime-store plastic animals and a cardboard box, let the children construct a barn. Two-year-olds can use water to wash the animals; three-, four-, and five-year-olds can use water to make pretend duck ponds; and children six-years-old and older can create pretend rivers, lakes, and oceans. You can call this geology if you want to.

—Make a museum, using not only rocks, plants, and leaves, but living creatures like worms, caterpillars, ants, and beetles. The children should be old enough, however, to understand your museum animals as living creatures. (Some mothers don't like this kind of zoo!)

While you're getting the house ready for company, children might enjoy having a preteen help them play with: a cardboard carton painted to resemble a stove; some dress-up clothes; some plastic containers or doll dishes; "cooking" mixtures of stones, twigs, and leaves; and one or two library books selected with the children's ages in mind.

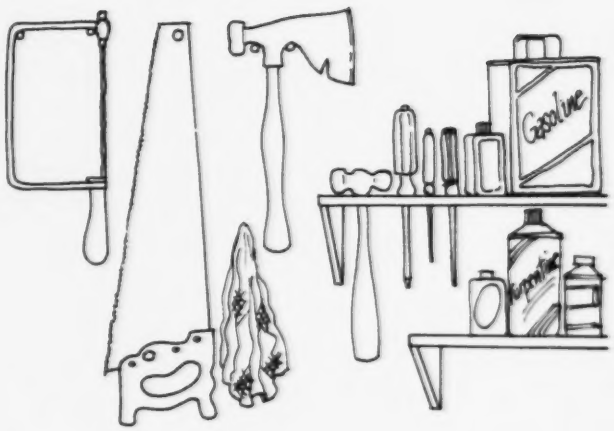
The possibilities for fun and learning are endless. It takes only ingenuity and energy to create a rich, wonderful environment for play.

A Child's World of Hazards*
(Meeting IV)

By touching, smelling, and tasting objects, children learn as they grow. Infant surroundings are limited; but as children begin to roam about the house, their environment soon mushrooms into a playground of new shapes, sights, tastes, and textures. To preschoolers, play is serious business. A child's world is home, yet home can be full of hazards. Most accidents involving children could be prevented by adults—if they would only look at objects through a child's eyes. Only you can make a child's world safe in which to grow.

Is Your Home Safe for Your Children?

Perhaps one of your parents or another adult would help you check your home for safety. Here are some things to look for:



	YES	NO
FALLS		
1. Are floors near stairways free of objects and throw rugs?	—	—
2. Are steps always free of toys, tools, and other objects?	—	—
3. Do throw rugs have non-skid pads?	—	—
4. Are windows locked or heavily screened?	—	—
BURNS AND SMOKE		
5. Are candles kept away from curtains and other material that can burn?	—	—
6. Are proper fuses used? Pennies or other metal objects are dangerous.	—	—
7. Are electrical cords in good condition?	—	—
8. Are unused electrical outlets covered or locked?	—	—
9. Are cleaning fluids, kerosene, gas, paint, and thinners kept in proper containers outside the house?	—	—
10. Are oily housekeeping rags kept in covered metal cans or hung in the open air?	—	—
11. Are matches kept out of the reach of young children?	—	—
12. Are pan handles on stove tops placed so children cannot reach them?	—	—
SUFFOCATION		
13. Are plastic bags torn up or kept on a high shelf?	—	—
14. Are baby's toys too large to swallow and too strong to break?	—	—
15. Are the doors of old refrigerators knocked off or locked shut?	—	—
16. Are deep-freeze units and storage chests kept locked from young children?	—	—
17. Are clotheslines high enough to prevent children from running into them?	—	—

*Adapted from the National Safety Council, 425 N. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. 60611

POISONING	YES	NO
18. Are medicines and pills always kept away from children?	—	—
19. Are medicines you swallow kept separate from those you put on your skin?	—	—
20. Do dangerous medicines and pills have warnings on them?	—	—
21. Are dangerous medicines and pills in containers that children cannot open?	—	—
22. Can the medicine cabinet be locked to protect small children?	—	—
23. Is aspirin kept out of reach of young children?	—	—
24. Are cleaners, disinfectants, and polishes kept out of reach of small children?	—	—
25. Are insect and rat killers kept locked up?	—	—
26. Is lead-free paint used in all refinishing of furniture and toys?	—	—
27. Is the wall and ceiling plaster in good repair?	—	—

Helping Children With Daily Routines
(Meeting V)

Occasionally the daily routines of dressing, washing, toileting, and feeding become unhappy, chaotic times in families with young children. Children simply do not feel the pressure to get things done on their parents' schedule. Indeed, if left to their own devices, children would probably eat when they got hungry, sleep when they were tired, and rarely wash. Whether they would toilet train themselves without adult suggestions is an interesting question! However, part of becoming civilized involves learning to eat, sleep, wash, and use a toilet as other members of a social group do. Here are some practical and pleasant ways to help children accept these routines.

EATING

Often babies who have eaten large amounts of many different kinds of foods become fussy eaters when they're two- or three-years-old. Their appetites decrease largely because their rate of growth slows after the first year; they just don't need as much food as when they were infants. In addition, they begin to differentiate among tastes and textures, and like many of us, decide they like some foods better than others. As part of establishing their own autonomy, some children insist on feeding themselves, and most children enjoy picking up food (including applesauce and gelatin dessert) with their hands. Children will probably create a mess this way, but let them. It's a good idea for children to feel in control of the food that goes into their mouths.

Hints to help young children enjoy mealtimes:

1. Serve small portions of food. Begin with a tablespoon of each food, then serve more if the children eat this serving and would like more.

2. Limit between-meal snacks to fruits, vegetables, or small chunks of cheese. Soda, potato chips, and candy, are unnecessary and can interfere with good nutrition.

3. Allow children to feed themselves, using their hands instead of spoons if necessary. Put a sheet of newspaper or a bath towel under the children's chairs, and provide large, washable bibs. Children who are reluctant to drink milk will often drink it happily if you let them pour their own. A cream pitcher and a small, wide-bottomed glass make for easier pouring (it's hard to pour into paper cups because they tip).

4. Keep a damp sponge or dish cloth handy, and encourage children to use it to mop up their own spills with your help. If you are calm and cheerful about the mess, children will be, too. "Let's clean it up" will go much further than "You clumsy . . . ."

5. Involve children in preparing a meal whenever possible. They can spread butter or peanut butter, make hamburger patties, mix pudding, and do many other tasks that are part of cooking.

One final caution: Try not to use desserts as rewards or punishments. Dessert is simply a part of the meal. If nutritious, it can be one of the child's available choices.

SLEEPING

Going to bed can be difficult and sometimes scary for young children. Not only does sleep mean an end to the fun of playing, but it can mean separation from the people children love and appreciate.

Hints to help young children go to bed:

1. Let them know it will soon be time for bed or a nap, instead of swooping down on them with an abrupt "Time for bed." Say to them, "When we have finished this book, or game, or block building, it will be time to put your pajamas on."

2. Make getting ready for bed both relaxing and fun. You can put a teddy bear to bed first; or, with the child, plan a song to sing together "when you are all cozy in your bed." Sometimes it helps to hide a book under the child's pillow so that you can say, "I put something special under your pillow for us to look at after you're in bed."

3. Provide the child with a night light, or leave a light on for children who are nervous about being in a dark room.

4. Make the separation from you and other adults

a gradual one. Offer to sit in the child's room, sing a few songs, or chat while the child is settling down. Getting a child established comfortably in rest or sleep usually takes time, and it's wise to allow for that time.

5. If the child cries or seems very anxious after you leave the room, offer to sit outside the room with your own book or knitting, etc. If the child demands more books or songs, say firmly, "No—we've had our stories and songs. Now it's time to be quiet, but I'll keep you company quietly while you are going to sleep." Be prepared for one or two potty and drink-of-water calls before the final quiet!

OTHER ROUTINES

Children may also need help with other routines that may pose problems for adults as well as themselves, such as washing, using the toilet, and getting dressed.

Hints for helping children wash, use the toilet, and get dressed:

1. Plan with the child something interesting that will happen when the child has finished washing, toileting, and dressing. Here are some examples.
   —"After we've washed our hands, it will be time to fix our hamburgers, and I'd like you to help make the patties."
   —"When you've used the toilet, I thought we'd go out to play in the sand box."
   —"Please put on your jacket so we can both go out to see if there are worms on the driveway after the rain."

2. Make the routine more interesting or more fun. You might say, for instance, "Let's put this paper cup into the tub with you while you take your bath. I wonder if it will float?"

3. Occasionally children are nervous about using an adult-sized toilet. They may be afraid they'll fall in or be flushed down. Sometimes it helps to suggest that they "ride the toilet like a horse," facing toward the back. This allows them to climb on and off more easily, have something to grasp, and observe the process of urinating or defecating, which many children find fascinating. Sometimes it's wise to use a potty or potty chair with a child who clearly feels anxious about the large toilet. It's almost always better to have a few more wet or soiled pants than to force a child to sit on a toilet or potty. Sometimes it's difficult for us to remember that most children learn to use the toilet by the time they are three-, four-, or five-years-old; but they have to make up their minds that this is something *they* want to do!

4. Try to sing about a "routine" task. The words to the old nursery rhyme "Polly put the kettle on" can be changed to "Stevie put your boots on," or to "Nancy wash your hands now," or to "Bruce use the toilet now," even by people who are not very musical! Children love to hear their own names in songs and will sometimes get dressed, washed, or toileted quite happily if the person who is helping them can sing about them and their activities.

5. Sometimes, of course, all the pleasant ways fail and an adult must pick up a tired, cranky child and say firmly, but gently, "I'm sorry you feel so tired and cross. I hope you'll feel better after you've had a nap" and, almost willy-nilly, put the child to bed.

On the whole, however, people who care for children can ease them through routines by: 1) allowing plenty of time; 2) preparing the children ahead of time; 3) allowing children to be as independent as possible; 4) making the routine as pleasant and as much fun as possible.

Teaching Manners

Manners, like much behavior, are "caught," not "taught." If we are polite at the table and in other places, children will imitate our polite behavior. We hope children will develop an enjoyment of food and look forward to mealtimes as pleasant social occasions. We can't expect children to act like miniature adults at the table. But we can expect them to enjoy and copy the polite speech and actions of the people with whom they live. Children are not always as polite as they know how to be when they're at home. The real test comes when children are guests at someone else's table!

Discipline Means Helping Children Gain Self-Control
(Meeting VI)

Most parents and teachers agree on four important goals for healthy development in a child's early years.

1. Each child should develop a positive self-image; that is, children should see themselves as competent people, generally able to do what is expected of them.
2. Children should be encouraged by the adults who care for them to be curious—to ask questions and to explore the world in which they live.
3. Children should be helped to develop language skills—to talk clearly and listen carefully.
4. Children should begin to develop the ability to be self-disciplined—to control their own behavior.

A four-year-old once paid her parents the nicest compliment they had ever received when she said to them, "Sometimes you say 'no' to me; sometimes you help me say 'no' to myself; but all the times you love me." Perhaps this statement from a highly verbal child describes the key to good discipline. We want children to feel they are good people, worthy of our love and respect, although we may not like or allow some of the things they do.

The behavior of young children can be frustrating and confusing to adults; particularly to adults who have had little previous experience with very small human beings. Sometimes children want to be independent and grown-up, but they also want to be babies, and to be taken care of like babies. They want to be able to decide things for themselves, but they are frequently unhappy with decisions they have made.

Sometimes children want to do the "right" thing, but the grown-ups they live with are too busy, too important, or too involved with their own problems to give the slow, careful guidance children need if they are to grow into self-disciplined people. All children need to know that even when they make the "wrong" decision, perhaps breaking rules or throwing tantrums, the adults who are important to them still love them, choose to be with them, and will give them another chance.

Of course it's easy to say this, but more difficult to believe it when faced with a child who is behaving in a way that seems just plain unpleasant. It is reassuring to many preschoolers' parents that most children exhibit difficult-to-cope-with behavior in one, a few, or many areas before they are five-years-old.

Here are some suggestions that may be useful to adults who want to help children develop the ability to discipline themselves:

1. As children become better at listening, adults will be able to explain the reasons for directions.
   a. "You may paint as many papers as you like, although you may not paint the table."
   b. "It makes it hard for us to hear each other if people yell inside. Keep your voice quiet in the playroom; we can yell outside later."
   c. "Banging the piano so hard might break it, but you can pound this clay as hard as you like."
2. Children should be offered a choice only if the adult intends to accept their decision.
   a. Say "Let's go in for juice now," not "Would you like to go in for juice now?"
   b. Say "Rest time now," not "Are you going to rest now?"
   c. Say "Here's a place for you," not "Would you like to sit here to listen to the story?"

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3. The adult voice is a teaching tool.
   a. When a group of children are noisy, you should lower your own voice first. Then you can whisper or speak to the nearest child, trying to have something so interesting to say that the child will be quiet and listen. It's surprising how quickly the other children will crowd around to hear, too. Of course, sometimes this doesn't work at all.
   b. When you want to tell more than one child something, move to each child as you speak to him or her and get down to the child's level. Never stand in one place and bellow instructions; in fact, never stand in one place and bellow anything.
   c. If children in a group are having a hard time listening, you can put a firm, but friendly arm around each child, or hold their hands to help them stay still long enough to hear what you're saying.

4. Distraction works best when you offer children the same kind of activity as the one they have chosen for themselves.
   a. A child who is jumping off the bookshelves into the block buildings can be shown a place to jump without bothering other people—but a puzzle or a sitting-still activity will not appeal to the child.
   b. A child who is swearing frequently and loudly is more likely to be diverted by nonsense sounds and silly language than by being told, "That isn't nice." For instance, to a child who says "damn," you can say "damn, lam, pam, wam, cam."
   c. A child who is sitting in the corner sucking a thumb is more likely to want to sit on your lap and listen to a story than to join a group of children playing house.

In conclusion, any adult can force, frighten, or bribe a child into behaving in an obedient, conforming fashion. Helping children develop the ability to make and carry out wise decisions about their own behavior is perhaps the most difficult task confronting parents, teachers, and other adults.

The following quote should help you to think about what positive discipline means.

> "There is universal agreement among adults that children must learn self-control. Sharp differences of opinion, however, develop as to how it shall be encouraged. The goal *always* must be to help the child learn, not to punish him. Too often the adult loses his temper and lashes out with angry words or physical violence, hitting, spanking or shaking the child. None of these forms of punishment has a place in a good child care center or an *understanding* home. Such treatment only makes the child angry and resentful and usually brings out more unacceptable behavior.
>
> The adult who meets a child's violence with more violence is not practicing self-control himself. He is copying the child's behavior. He is actually telling the child that violence is all right if you happen to be bigger. This is the philosophy of a bully. No adult consciously wants to teach a child to grow up to be a bully!"[1]

When the authors say, "The goal *always* must be to help the child learn, not to punish him," we can see this as the *ultimate* goal of the discipline process. Even if punishment may return peace and order to the home by restraining the child, the long-range goal is for the child to learn some personal values. We do not claim that if an adult spanks, shakes, or screams at a child, the home is necessarily a bad one. These negative types of discipline can release adult frustration and tension. But there are other, more positive ways to handle children that also allow adults to express strong feelings. Adults should *try* to avoid lashing out at children; they should *try* to find other ways to handle the situation. Adults who understand that angry, lashing-out behavior on their parts may lead to similar kinds of behavior from children when they get mad will be reminded to continue to search for other ways to discipline. If adults do lash out, and it probably does happen in most homes, they don't have to be ashamed; but they do need to continue to *try* to make the home a better place for learning positive ways to grow in feelings of self-worth.

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[1] *More than a Teacher*. Lois B. Murphy & Ethel M. Leeper; HEW Publication No. (OMD) 75-1027 page 14.

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